

July 11th 2021

Please note the full weekly written reflections will finish next week. With the new regulations coming into place (according to the Government's roadmap about meeting together) we would like to encourage you to come to church services to hear the reflection in person. A very short written reflection will be placed on the notice sheet. If you would like to come to church and need a lift or if you would like to receive home communion please do ring Linda Baker or Revd Becky on 01722 333564.

Readings

Mark 6 v 14- 29 Ephesians 1 v 3-14

There are so many rumours about Royalty aren't there? (Especially this last week with the anniversary of Princess Diana's birthday and her sons supposed falling out. Royalty will always be in the media headlines.)

Today we hear rumours around royalty in Biblical times. King Herod supports the rumours that Jesus is John raised from the dead.. he recognises Jesus' authority and wisdom and understands that if Jesus was John who had been down into death and returned, this would explain Jesus' remarkable powers.

John the baptist had got into trouble with Herod for speaking his mind when Herod took his brother's wife, Herodias, in marriage. John stood up for morality and the law. Herod stood for rebuilding the Temple in order for the Jews to recognise him as their true king. John's kingdom was about forgiveness, about going the extra mile to serve others, about returning to God's laws. Herod's kingdom was about recognition and power.

Mark's gospel tells the story of John the baptist's death – at a party- his head requested on a platter by Herod's daughter in law straight after she had danced. Mark presents this story straight after the twelve disciples have been sent out on mission to proclaim God's kingdom. Why? Mark is making the point that following Jesus and kingdom values are costly. He is making the prophetic point that Jesus will die and is speaking into the lives of the Christian communities who were facing persecution and hardship for their determination to stick with the Kingdom message whatever the authorities might do.

'Mark leaves his readers in no doubt. John was a righteous and holy man and the kingdom of God of which he had spoken and the forgiveness he had offered were the reality that would win the day.' Tom Wright.

Rumours

What is interesting to note is that rumours about this party continue into church history and today. Herodias, and Herod's daughter in law have been portrayed as sex symbols motivated by their desires. Salome was shown as a seductress in art, film and literature. The text does not say that *she* seduced Herod Antipas. It does say Herod was drunk. At Herod's daughter's age, it would have been normal for girls to dance at a party in Greco Roman culture with no sexual overtones. It would also have been true that many 'slaves' who danced were used sexually.

Herodias, her mother had been passed from one man to another. Herodias is a mother raising a daughter within the Roman imperial political system and its violence. While we may find her causing his death horrific, none of us are women who live in the same context as they did. We do not know what survival tactics Herodias had to possess to stay clothed or stay fed or even alive. So, watch out that your reading of the text is not based on rumour and consider their position!

Consider

- The cost of being a disciple and living out kingdom values
- The lives of some women whose 'fight' for survival is still costly to themselves
- What would you say are kingdom values?

Revd Becky

HYMN REFLECTION FOR JULY 11th

Leaving aside Herodias and John, we turn to today's second lesson and the first thing I must do is to recommend to those who don't know it that you listen to Wesley's wonderful anthem using a version of the same text (*Blessed be the God and Father*). There is a clean and lovely performance from our own Cathedral on Youtube; there is also a beefier one, sound only, from Wakefield, with more men, and boys with harder northern accents. Terrific.

But this is a Hymn Reflection. Who are Frances Jane van Alstyne, who wrote under nearly 200 different pen-names, and Phoebe Palmer Knapp, and what did they do together in 1873? Well, you've guessed it; they wrote a hymn. The author is generally known as Fanny Crosby, a blind lady who wrote over 8,000 hymns. Quantity did not equate with quality, and even a century ago the majority were dismissed as mawkish, "alright for hymns, but not as poetry"!!! Fanny Crosby was quite a lady; her forbears travelled on the Mayflower and founded Harvard University. She consorted with Presidents, and worked with hymn writers Sankey and Moody, who gathered vast congregations wherever they went in the late 19th century. She adopted the pen-names because there were so many of her hymns in contemporary hymn books that she didn't want to monopolise the indexes. She lived to 95 years old.

Only two of her hymns are found in modern British hymn books (*Hymns Old & New/NHWS* have three). Hymnary.Org lists Ephesians I as one of the scriptural sources for both, so either would be suitable to go with our reading, *To God be the glory* or *Blessed Assurance*; we shall use the latter. Phoebe wrote the tune first, and asked Fanny what it suggested to her; Fanny replied, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine". She meant a foretaste of glory, and an assurance of the life to come. See Becky's quote from Hebrews XI last week. It became a favourite of First World War soldiers; although the tune is in triple time, they managed to march to it.

Blessèd assurance, Jesus is mine:
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God;
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood:
*This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long (repeat chorus).*

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
visions of rapture burst on my sight;
angels descending bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love.
This is my story, etc.

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Saviour am happy and blest -
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with his goodness, lost in his love:
This is my story, etc.

MGS

[A prayer from Christian Aid about all women who are caught up in sex work in India.](#)

Dear Lord, I thank you for all who share their love and support for your mission, for why you have sent your son, our beloved Christ to this world. We learn from him why we were also brought into this world. How to be his disciples and address hypocrisy. Lord our God, I want to see no women and girls engaging in sex work but instead having a dignified life, since you have created all equal. Amen.

**Praise be to the God
and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ, who has
blessed us in the
heavenly realms with
every spiritual blessing
in Christ.**